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.....

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THE WAY OF REINCARNATION

In Palestine, on the slopes of Mount Hermon about forty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee, are scattered the ruins of an ancient city, Caesarea Philippi by name. One day, while approaching the outskirts of this city, the Master Jesus asked His disciples a question of such far-reaching importance that, had its full meaning been understood by later generations, the whole religious history of Western civilization would have been changed. The question was: "Whom say the people that I am?"

To many the question is unintelligible, but the disciples apparently understood His meaning, for one answered that some people thought that Jesus was John the Baptist returned; for John the Baptist had been beheaded some time before. Others of the disciples said that He was regarded as the reincarnation either of Elias, or of Jeremiah, both of whom had been dead for centuries. In short, the rumor was current that in the person of Jesus, to quote: "One of the old prophets is risen again", which indicates how widespread was the idea of reincarnation at the time. Jesus affirms it in that well known but little understood statement: "But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listeth..." Then the disciples understood that "He spake unto them of John the Baptist."

Josephus implies in his history of the wars of the Jews that the idea of the rebirth of the soul was common among the people, and judging from several striking passages in the Gospels, in addition to that already mentioned, there is evidence in support of this implication. Reincarnation was also well known to the Romans, for it is referred to by a number of their poets, while among the Greeks it was taught by several of the philosophers. Chief among them Plato. Traces of the idea of reincarnation, in a modified form, are to be found in the ancient Egyptian religion. Later in Alexandria, this teaching received much attention from the Neo-Platonists and Gnostics. It even was part of the teaching of Christianity up to the year 532 A. D. when the Gnostic teachings were dropped.

Reincarnation was sung in the Sagas of the Northmen, and spread with the legends of the Gauls. It formed part of the mystic lore of the Druids, and even today a belief in the re-

turn of the soul still lingers among the Celtic peasantry of Ireland and of Brittany.

Strangely enough the idea of reincarnation was also current among the now fast disappearing tribes of Red Indians on the American continent. From Alaska to Peru, among the Eskimos, the Sioux, the Zunis, and particularly the Incas, the idea was taught by the Priests and held by the tribesmen. Even among the natives of the Hawaiian Islands, of Australia, and of the Islands of the South Seas, the idea is not unknown.

It is in the Orient, however, that the teaching of reincarnation has spread most widely and exerted the greatest influence. It is the basic teaching of most of the religious and philosophic systems of India, and today throughout the Orient over six hundred and fifty millions of human beings accept the truth of reincarnation in about the same way that we accept the truth of the law of gravity...as a great natural and inevitable law which it is foolish to question.

Obviously, then, reincarnation has long been one of the fundamental religious ideas of mankind.

The origin of the idea is unknown, for its roots strike so deep into the many layers of human thought deposited through the ages that it is impossible to trace them to their beginnings. It is surmised that the belief in reincarnation antedates all known history, and certainly traces of it are to be found in all religions and in the myths of primitive peoples.

Back of all the fancies clustering round the belief in the rebirth of the soul, there must surely be a vital truth, else the idea could not have endured for so many thousands of years; nor could it have attracted the attention of so many great thinkers. Part of the work of the Theosophical Society has been to present the vital truth of reincarnation, free from misconceptions and superstitions, and it is astounding how quickly thoughtful people have come to regard it with favor. Forty or fifty years ago it was ridiculed, and only a few people took it seriously, much less made it their working philosophy of life. Now it is probable that over a million people in the Western world look upon reincarnation as the most logical explanation of many social, religious, and philosophical problems. The acceptance of rein-

carnation has spread far beyond the limits of the Theosophical Society. This is due not to any desire to return to earth, for most people at first shrink from this; but to the inherent reasonableness of reincarnation, and to its extraordinary value in explaining the most baffling of human problems. Those in touch with the currents of modern thought are convinced that reincarnation will soon be generally accepted by most thinking people, not because of any passing popularity; but because of its sheer power to convince, to illuminate, and to inspire.

Reincarnation is destined to be the Great Idea of this century, even as the idea of Evolution transformed the conceptions of the last.

Few people ever take the trouble to think out how much is taken for granted as being true without any real thought about the matter at all.

When a child is born, for example, we take for granted that its consciousness was created with its body. The basis for this assumption, of course, is easy to be seen. In the child we apparently see the development of the consciousness with the death of the body. From these parallel changes, we receive the impression that the brain produces the consciousness; but this is not by any means the only conclusion. Observing the same occurrences, it is equally logical to conclude that the brain is not the originator, but rather the instrument of consciousness, and quite distinct from it.

According to the delicacy and response of the instrument, the brain, will be the physical expression of the consciousness using it.

The brain of an infant has little power of response, because it is too plastic and unorganized. So the consciousness using it can impress but little of itself upon it. As the child grows and the brain becomes more organized, the child's consciousness is much more in evidence. Not because of the growth of the consciousness itself, but because of the improvement in the instrument transmitting the consciousness.

In old age, the brain becomes less responsive, and hence consciousness becomes dimmed. At death, the instrument, the brain, stops functioning, and therefore the consciousness can

no longer make itself manifest physically. Putting it tersely, the consciousness of man is no more dependent upon the physical brain for existence, than is a musician upon his violin, but both instruments are necessary for expression in the physical world.

The brain is a delicately arranged receiving instrument, composed of millions of nerve cells with their branches and binding tissue.

The viewpoint from which to approach the study of reincarnation is that as human beings we can, and do, exist just as truly without a physical body as with it, both after death and before birth.

This is the first fundamental fact of reincarnation---that the Human Consciousness exists before birth, before conception. The infant is young in body only. While the consciousness within that little body may be also young, it may quite as likely be a mature consciousness which has had much human experience in the past during other lives on earth.

The second great fact of reincarnation we will discuss on our next Broadcast.

THE MEANING OF REINCARNATION

Last week we discussed the First Fundamental Fact of Reincarnation, which is that man's consciousness exists before his birth and after his death.

Today we will consider the Second Great Fact of Reincarnation--that is that the soul or Conscious Self of man is a growing thing and that its development from its first awakening to the gaining of its splendid maturity is extended over an enormous period of time, measured in tens of thousands of years. The soul is "perfect" at the beginning of its human experience only in the same sense that a seed is perfect. There is just as much difference relatively between a "young" and "old" soul as there is between an acorn and an oak. It is permissible to speak of this growth of the soul as an evolution of consciousness; but we should be careful in our thinking not to confuse such growth with the evolution of physical bodies, which is the subject-matter of the Darwinian and other evolutionary theories.

Physical evolution is carried on by means of birth, cell-growth, parenthood, death, new bodies ever being produced by the old, and thus giving rise to a continuity of physical forms. The whole tendency of physical evolution is from simple to complex. At one end of the organic series is the single cell without organs or structures, and at the other the extraordinarily complex body of man with its millions of cells grouped into organs and tissue. The evolution of consciousness, on the other hand, takes place by a process of ensoulment of the evolving physical forms. This process of repeated embodiment is known as Reincarnation, the soul periodically using a new body.

Reincarnation is the means by which hosts of evolving lives, of all degrees of development, are brought into association with evolving physical forms of all degrees of complexity. For gaining experience, it is obvious that the consciousness, or life, must match the evolution of the form, and through the automatic processes of Nature this always happens. Thus by means of the instrumentality of the human body is made manifest a highly developed type of consciousness, not found in the lower kingdoms, because the human body with its marvelous brain structure is far more adapted to the needs of such a consciousness than is the relatively undeveloped

brain of, say, an animal.

Is it not evident from a study of Nature that in the great plan of things little attention is paid to the preservation of forms? Death is universal; everywhere physical bodies are being sacrificed to keep other physical bodies alive. Mineral forms are broken up to furnish food for plants; plants are sacrificed to animals; animals to man. From the purely physical point of view, Nature seems a house of death, and this very fact has been not only the despair of many philosophers but the chief argument of some scientists against the religious belief in God.

In the light of Reincarnation it is recognized that the reason Nature cares so little for physical bodies is that they are really of minor importance. Their one function is to serve the growing consciousness as a means for gaining experience. Consciousness, with its power of memory, is the important thing; and consciousness is carefully preserved. We may define Reincarnation, then, by saying that it is a plan whereby imperishable conscious beings are supplied with physical bodies which are appropriate to their stage of growth and through which they can come in contact with the lessons of physical life.

From the standpoint of reincarnation the earth--and quite likely the whole universe--is a great school. It was brought into existence for educational purposes, and the whole plan of evolution is designed to give just the amount and kind of experience which is needed to stimulate the growth of an almost infinite series of living things, of which the known physical kingdoms form only a part.

Just as a child goes to school day after day learning lessons, gathering experience, and passing from grade to grade, so do we in our greater soul-life, come here to earth many times learning lessons, gathering experience, and passing from one grade to another. We began our human evolution as savages because our moral and intellectual powers had hardly begun to stir. After a few lives amid such primitive conditions, we developed some slight trace of mental faculty and moral response, and were then born into some rude type of civilization. Much suffering marked our various incarnations because we were willful and sometimes cruel; but as the centuries advanced and we reaped many a harsh harvest,

grown from seed of our own sowing, then the voice of conscience--which is only the summarized memory of past experience--became more insistent, and we began to refrain slightly from wrong-doing.

As incarnation followed incarnation in rather rapid succession, we grew intellectually and morally through contact with the people about us, through the discipline of the law, and through the very pressure of physical existence. We were still ignorant folk, able to perform only unskilled labor; but, nevertheless, life on earth taught us slowly how to become something better, as it does every human being. Life after life passed, each with its joys and sorrows, its opportunities and its difficulties, its successes and its failures, until we became skilled artisans. Here we learned of a higher standard of living, and slowly began to think, instead of constantly being awayed by unreasoning feeling and prejudices. Gradually, as the lives on earth followed one another, our spirituality began to awaken. We are developing into Thinkers and occupy a relatively important position in the evolutionary scale.

Some of our fellow-pupils are more advanced than we and are acknowledged by the world as the Leaders of civilization, either by the splendor of their intellectual powers, the ability of their moral character, or the keenness of their spiritual insight. In this there is no favoritism; it is only a matter of growth. The level they have reached we, ourselves, shall some day attain if we take advantage of our opportunities.

They are more advanced and have greater power because their evolutionary development started at an earlier period than did ours. We do not cry "favoritism" because in a school some pupils are in the upper classes while others are in the lower. It is all a matter of TIME for after a while the pupils in the lower classes will themselves be in the higher. The same plan is followed in the World School. Ahead of us are "older" souls, behind us "younger" souls. The procession is endless! While millions pass through the various classes, one by one, and eventually graduate, there are always other millions treading in their foot-steps. In this there is no injustice, but only a definite educational scheme.

So, in the light of Reincarnation, we may picture humanity

as marching up a giant stairway, the lower part of which can be seen emerging from the twilight of the beginning of things, the upper part vanishing into the glory of Divinity. How long the stairway is we do not know; but this is really not important. The important thing to realize is that we are, all of us, now standing upon one of the steps, and that the position we hold in the procession marks definitely our stage of growth.

Such a realization ought to be an inspiration to you and me, for by it we know that the great men and women of the world show us in their character and in their achievement what we with effort may become.

That we learn by experience nobody will deny. That the events of daily life develop intellect and compassion is too obvious for argument. It is equally clear that the mental and moral difference between the savage and the civilized man is so great that only a very small portion of the evolutionary work can be done in the longest physical life possible to man.

The way in which Nature accomplishes so great an achievement is by repeated visits of the soul to earth...so that the Soul or conscious Self of man may grow.

Thus GROWTH is the second great fact of Reincarnation.

THE PURPOSE OF REINCARNATION

Reincarnation does not mean that the human soul can be reborn in an animal body. To think of a human being, endowed with keen sensibilities, moral perceptions and intellectual power, as being reborn after death in the body of an animal is certainly the abyss of illogic, and could serve no moral or evolutionary process whatsoever in the universe. Every process of Nature has always been found to have a definite PURPOSE, and reincarnation is no exception.

Nor does reincarnation necessarily imply that we are reborn immediately after death, though in rare cases this may happen. The average period between incarnations for an intelligent man or woman is in the neighborhood of from five to seven hundred years, although the variations in this interval are so great that it is impossible to state a true average which is universally applicable.

Many people, when their attention is first drawn to reincarnation, dislike the idea immensely. They have not the slightest desire to be reborn, and so, without the least attempt to consider the matter, dismiss the idea. Mere dislike, however, disproves nothing. Indeed most new truths are disliked. There is no opposition so intense as that which is aroused by new ideas. A hasty rejection of reincarnation, therefore, may be thoroughly human, but it does not disprove its truth. Our opposition to reincarnation arises largely from the fact that existence on earth is not easy. We are opposed to the associated thought that if we are reborn we must go through the trials of earth-life again. Our natural shrinking from this is the real cause of most opposition to reincarnation. We seldom look at life from the standpoint of its opportunities for GROWTH; but nearly always measure it according to its power to cater to our desire for pleasure, position, honors, amusements. Because we are often denied these coveted things, which are really of no educational value, and given instead hardships, labor, sorrows, failures, problems which teach us most quickly, we are violently opposed to any repetition of the process. How swiftly our opposition would fade away if we were guaranteed, upon our return to earth, the granting of all our desires!

Have you ever thought, however, that the very experiences which are most difficult to bear, TEACH you the greatest

lessons of life? Every pain you suffer, every hardship you endure, every failure means in the end more strength, more power to achieve. It should not be forgotten that much of the pain and suffering of human existence is due to a disregard of certain moral principles. Pain and the problems of living force us to a serious regard of those principles.

Now let us discuss the PURPOSE of reincarnation. The chief purpose of reincarnation is education. To this end we are born again, not because of any external pressure but because we as souls desire to grow. The driving-power at the back of reincarnation which brings us to earth again is the thirst for experience, the desire for knowledge, the yearning to mingle in the throb and rush of physical existence. To many people whose lives here on earth have been rather difficult these desires seem inconceivable. The reason is that satiety kills out desire. A man who has just eaten a hearty dinner has no desire to think of other meals. In the same way, at the end of an incarnation, or life, it is to be expected that we should have little desire for rebirth. The physical consciousness, limited in outlook to the narrow horizons of a single earth-life, does not desire to be reborn; but the soul consciousness, having a larger goal in view, is eager to return.

In the current vague ideas regarding the human soul, there is no realization that strength, wisdom, and character are all the results of an age-long education and not the carelessly scattered gifts of some whimsical destiny. There is soul growth as well as physical growth. There is gradual awakening of mental faculty during a whole series of lives in much the same way that there is an awakening of the mind in the childhood of each life on earth. Life's great PURPOSE is to develop our inherent powers. As you and I grow, we do not add anything unto ourselves. We only arouse that which we already have slumbering within. Exactly the same process takes place when a seed sprouts. The germ within merely begins to unfold what is already contained within it. Growth is the stirring of latent powers into active expression. We, as immortal spirits, contain deep within ourselves everything we shall have ultimately. Within each soul infinity lies hidden. In a sense, each human being is the center of the universe, for God lives equally in all.

If the character of our neighbor is adorned with a virtue

which we have not, if he is equipped with a sterling quality which we admire, it is not that he has been given more than we but that he has awakened into activity that particular virtue or quality sooner than we. If we wish to become like him there is nothing to prevent our making the efforts which surely will bring our desire to fruition.

The glorious imagery of the gifted artist, the divine harmonies of the inspired musician, the keen mentality and patience of the scientist, the profundity of the philosopher, the wisdom of the born teacher...all these powers and many more lie hidden within us awaiting the time when we shall arouse them with the magic of the will.

There is neither great nor small, old nor young, wise nor ignorant from the Godward side of the universe. All is God. But from the formward side God is expressed in different degrees of power according to the capacity of the form. If the form be dense and unresponsive, as is the body of a savage, little of indwelling Divinity can manifest itself. If the form be pure, refined and evolved, the inward God is able to shine forth with such blinding glory that we bow our heads in reverence and adoration. This is what St. Paul meant by the Christ within. As growth takes place, the immeasurable LIFE behind is able ever more and more to manifest its Beauty and its Power.

On the matter side of evolution is seen the slow transformation of mineral to plant, plant to animal, animal to man. On the Soul side is seen the over-brooding spiritual Life gradually learning to inhabit and control these bodies of matter.

We are a race of resplendent Spiritual Beings. Such has ever been the message of the Seers of all ages. All bodies are but forms in which the Spirit is unfolding. Even the soul-body itself may be thought of as a radiant and flashing Chalice of subtle matter in which is glowing a fragment of the Life that is God.

Thus we have in this World School old and young physical bodies whose age is measured by the years which stretch between the cradle and the grave. Also we have old and young souls whose vaster span of life is measured by hundreds of incarnations on earth. The Spirit alone is without measure, without age, without limit...the Source of all things.

What greater stimulus to courage and valiant exertion than the knowledge that the loftiest ideal of which we dream, the mightiest powers for which we long, the beauty of character to which we aspire, are all to be found within ourselves! But we must work for their development. We stand like men above a buried treasure, and all we have to do is DIG.

Soul wisdom can be gained in no other way than by plucking in the gardens of the world the sweet and bitter blossoms of love and hate, action and sloth, success and failure, joy and sorrow, peace and turmoil. We grow as gradually we learn to master these conflicting forces and move with steady feet in the midst of a storm, or take full advantage of a time of calm. Everything has its teaching value and broadening effect.

Think for a moment of what you have learned from your greatest joys and from your periods of happy leisure. And then think what you have learned from your difficulties, your frustrations and your tragedies. Have you now a bit more appreciation of beauty, a bit more humor, more sympathy, more courage or more patience than you had earlier in life? Then you can thank life for what it has taught you, and your resentments will vanish in thin air.

EDUCATION is the purpose of Reincarnation, as GROWTH is its meaning.

LIFE'S INEQUALITIES

As far as this world is concerned, equality among men is non-existent either physically, morally, or spiritually. Some have quick brains, others are dull. Some are moral, others oblivious to their moral obligations. In short, equality is denied everywhere we turn.

Why is it that to mediocrity often comes opportunity; to real worth, hardship and despair? Why, from a moral standpoint, is not right always rewarded and wrong always punished? Many religions teach of a world to come where suffering will be recompensed, sins forgiven, ignorance dispelled. Through all the ages men's eyes have turned for consolation to that world and have endured the trials here for what has been promised hereafter. True as such promises may be, would it not be reasonable to admit that if there is justice in the world to come, we certainly seem to be deprived of it here and now?

Turn where we will the world is full of inequalities, of startling contrasts which cannot be explained. Are we to believe that everything is left to chance? Can we conceive that a universe divinely ordered by a just and loving God permits the lives of His children to be left to the blind working of chance? Is it not significant that everything in Nature moves according to Law?

You and I and all of us seem to feel instinctively that there must be Divinity at the back of all things and all events, even though the conditions of the world do not prove it. A Master-Key is needed to unlock the mystery, to solve this problem of inequality. That Master-Key is found in Reincarnation. Reincarnation and moral order are inseparable. Only when we realize that we have lived and are now living a series of lives on earth, each one linked up with all the others which have gone before, are we able to see that God is just and that PURPOSE does govern every phase of existence.

Every individual then is responsible for his own physical, moral, and mental characteristics, which are simply the results of his own past experiences. Thus can we concede that the differences we see all around us are not due to any favoritism, or to the blind working of any law of physical he-

redity, but to soul age and past experience. Every capacity of mind, every ability of hand, every quality of heart, is ours not as a gift but as earned in previous lives here on earth. No one can give us character; it must be self-evolved in the school of life. Reincarnation postulates that there is nothing accidental. Everything is the determinate consequence of former acts, thoughts and desires. So also is absence of qualities due to lack of experience, or to failure in past opportunities.

Reincarnation, teaching the evolution of life, shows progress and growth of character to be a natural unfoldment. In Nature are always found at different stages of growth marks of the past along which it has evolved. Likewise are men found at all stages of intelligence and at all stages of moral development.

How can this be explained if all souls are equal at birth? Certainly not by the hypothesis of sudden creation, of a sudden appearance without cause, antecedents or anything else to explain it. Then why these great differences in human destinies or why even the small differences?

There is a moral necessity for the hypothesis of Reincarnation, as without it there can be no Divine Justice, no God of Compassion in this Universe. Why is one child born a cripple, another a potential athlete? Why is one born an idiot, another a genius? Why is one born kind and generous, another greedy and grasping? If God made the differences it certainly means injustice and consequent hopelessness.

For example, take a child born in the slums of a shiftless mother and a drunken father. He is taught nothing but curses and crime, knowing no kindness or love. He is compelled to steal for his food. He grows up to become a criminal, and, killing some one in a fit of drunken anger, is sent to the electric chair. Where would he go after death? He is certainly not fit for Heaven; but would it be fair to send him to an everlasting Hell, when he had no chance at all in Life?

Another soul is born to cultured parents who love him and train him into virtue. Having had the best in life he grows up in kindness and ability. His life is one of usefulness, benefitting all around him. What has he done to deserve

this? If each of these two very unequal persons has been born under special creation for the first time, with everlasting Heaven or Hell to follow after his death, has not the criminal the right to demand of God: "Why didst Thou make me so?"

But a study of reincarnation gives answers to such problems of inequality, answers which are reasonable and logical -- and supremely gratifying. Such a study will show you that the criminal we have just been discussing is a young soul. He has not had many incarnations and is thus close to the savage state with little control over his actions and emotions and thoughts. He is crude and ignorant in the ways of living, and so was born into a family quite like himself. The other young man is obviously an older soul, or he could not have absorbed the fine training that was given him. He has had, in his more numerous lives on earth, more chances to learn about living. He has grown into his understanding just as the other, the criminal, will also grow as time and lives go on.

There is another point to be remembered in considering the inequalities of life. If, perchance, our young criminal of today had, in his past lives, stood in the way of his fellows and held them back from making their natural progress--then he must find, within himself, how painful such frustration can be. That, too, could be a reason why he is born into a life devoid of opportunity--that he may learn by his own pain. And if perchance the other young man has such lessons as these well behind him and has lived lives of usefulness, it is a normal result that he shall be helped in this life.

Every man has ultimately to unfold all the Divine Possibilities latent in him, and the method of this unfoldment is evolution through reincarnation. For that purpose man is guided to the place in life which is best fitted to the development of special qualities in which he may be deficient. It is philosophically true to say that a man always gets the opportunities in life to obtain the conditions best suited to his character and to the eventual removal of his imperfections.

There is a law, moreover, which never fails. It is the Law of Attraction by which we meet in our next life on earth

those we love or hate in this life. When the tie of love or hate is forged between souls, even death cannot break it. Thus back we come, old friends, old enemies. The same souls, though dressed in new garb, as it were!

Reincarnation is truly a magnificent view of human evolution. No ultimate failure is possible; because there is always another chance. The failures of one incarnation are made good by the sincere efforts of the next. All the faults and frailties, the shadow-blots of the past vanish in the light of a higher wisdom that has been won. No endless hell, not even the ghost of vanished chances to haunt the mind. Only the insistent voice of Opportunity urging us to strive and win. Let me end with this poem which is so fitting:

"Though there be toil and turmoil yet to come,
Though there be death, and the loss of today's lover,
There will always be another rising of some sun,
Another coming to a worldly stage
With a chosen part to play
And some dear heart of yesterday to greet again
In this Drama that has no end."

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE THINK

Theosophy teaches that man has, besides his physical body, an emotional and a mental body as well. Let us try to see how we can use this mental body and what happens when we think. If one is trained in the art of thinking, one's influence is certain to produce a great effect on a wide circle. We are not always conscious of this power, but once it is recognized there is no end to what can be accomplished by it.

It is difficult for those who have not studied this subject to grasp the absolute reality of the process of thought, to understand that its action is in every way as definite upon our mental body as that of electricity upon our physical body. In fact, radio and television are very apt up-to-date illustrations of the use of unseen vibrations. And there are more rapid vibrations on other wave lengths which produce thought and bring it through to our own brain instrument.

Every one knows that a large amount of electrical power can do tremendously useful work, producing definite results. But few people realize that they have at hand a certain amount of this other and higher power which is thought power, and that with it can be produced results equally definite and equally real. Every man possesses mental force, and the potency of this higher world of thought is within the reach of all, though intelligently used by the very few.

As thought vibrates in subtle mental matter it takes shape so that when we think we unconsciously make what are known as thought-forms. These thought-forms persist for a time depending upon the definiteness and energy of the thinking. This is the reason for the strange phrase: Thoughts are things. So ethereal and fine is the nature of the matter in which thought expresses itself that it is invisible and intangible, recognized only by its effect on physical matter or physical action. For example, a man absorbed in a brown study, as the saying goes, is quite oblivious of the children who may be playing around him. That is because he is functioning in his mental body. We can see his immobile physical body and possibly describe him as "lazy" but we are totally unaware of what may be a tremendous activity in his mental body. Only when he speaks or moves are we made a-

ware of that mental activity, even though his whole consciousness is temporarily centered in it.

This centering of consciousness in one part or another of our inner selves is more common than you might suppose. Consider a young man who is very much in love. His consciousness is so centered in his emotional self that he is likely to lose all sense of judgment, which is mental. And a man who is straining his muscles in an effort to swim the English Channel obviously has his consciousness centered in the physical body and is not likely to be memorizing a scientific formula. Concentration of any kind consists in a focusing of attention on one phase of the self at a time. But in everyday living a person uses thoughts, feeling and actions simultaneously.

Despite the opinions of some of our more materialistic researchers into the physiology of the brain, the brain is not the originator of thought--it is the instrument used by the thinker, the soul--or in theosophical terminology, the Ego. When the Ego or real man thinks, his mental body vibrates according to the nature of his thoughts and this vibration instantly activates the brain. Everyone recognizes the fact that thought directs action, for it is obvious that a man must think before he can act. Thought is the motive power of his action. But it is not generally known that thought also has a direct effect on matter itself. Whether or not a man translates his thought into action, his thought itself has already produced an effect. It has set mental matter in motion producing a vibration. That vibration can be automatically communicated to physical matter and sometimes is. This brings us to the realization that thought is a very real and precise power.

In developing the power of thought, habit is a potent force. Mental bodies accustomed to a certain type of vibration learn to reproduce that vibration easily. A thought entertained today will be much easier to think tomorrow; and this is equally true whether the thought be good, bad, or indifferent. When thought involves the emotions, it stirs up the denser matter of the emotional body just as the wind disturbs the surface of the sea. You know as well as I do that a bad thought can easily arouse a bad emotion and that a happy thought can produce a happy emotion. If you are a happy person, thinking harmonious and kindly thoughts, you

generate a magnetism which draws people to you. They like you--they don't know exactly why. It is because your inner bodies create a lovely aura, and even rhythmic sounds, unheard physically, radiate from you. You are charming. Of course, the reverse is also true of those who habitually think unkind or evil thoughts, who are self-centered and irritable. An unseen ugliness radiates from them. The thoughts which they have created hover around them polluting their aura, as it were.

I feel sure that you are quite aware of another illustration of the way thoughts affect people. It lies in their sensitiveness to surroundings, whether houses, buildings, ships, cities, or countries. For example, a sensitive person on entering a place which has long been inhabited by gloomy people will at once feel that the place is dreary and depressing. On the other hand if it has been occupied by peaceful, kindly people he will feel it pleasant, cozy, relaxing. The reason for this is that the thoughts and feelings which have been generated there have left their invisible imprint by way of mental vibrations everywhere--even on the walls, the draperies and the furnishings. The result is that if a person stays a long time in that place he will be affected and influenced by this thought-legacy, as it were. We are quite accustomed to saying without knowing why that a house or city has its own special atmosphere. It is the thinking of the inhabitants which has created that atmosphere.

Now as we human beings move through life we create our own atmosphere. Our habitual thoughts are our mental atmosphere. Our habitual feelings are our emotional atmosphere. And our physical bodies are affected thereby. If you doubt that, look about you. Study the people you pass on the street. You can recognize the noble carriage, the noble face, as truly as you can recognize defeated, drooping posture or the crafty or surly face. Habitual thought sets its mark on the physical body and is recognizable in facial expression, in gesture, in posture, in movement.

The whole inner atmosphere of a city or country is created by the thoughts of its people. A person walking through such places is literally picking his mental way through masses of thoughts. Most of these float through his idle mind without arousing any particular interest. But now and then

a mental fragment attracts his attention. Then his mind fastens on it, entertains it for a moment before dismissing it. But the important point is that he has sent that thought out stronger because of the added vitality he has given it. If we at any time should review our thinking for the past ten minutes, we would be surprised to discover how many idle thoughts have passed through our minds during that time. Not one quarter of these thoughts are our own--they are simply fragments picked up from the mental world about us.

Modern advertising and propaganda agencies about us make use of the power of suggestive thinking by impressing their ideas on unoccupied minds over and over again. Their responsibility is great.

When you and I select with conscious choice the thoughts we wish to entertain and those we wish to reject, we begin to be aware of our responsibility for this great power. The world atmosphere surrounding us is a reservoir of thought. Each one of us by our thoughts does his share to purify or to contaminate that reservoir. Let us learn to "televise" only our best thought pictures and release them for the betterment of the world.

THE GATEWAY OF BIRTH

The poet William Wordsworth has written:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar-
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy."*

Trailing clouds of glory comes a new-born child to earth and Theosophy says the child is born not by chance but according to Divine Plan. The mother is watched over by angels at his birth, bringing him safely through the gateway of life, entrusting him to human hands.

To those who know reincarnation as part of the Divine Plan, the new-born child is not just a tender physical body to be fed and clad and housed, but a soul with potential mental, emotional and physical characteristics necessary for his expression here on earth. The tiny body is the new physical instrument of the soul. It is an instrument as certainly as the violin is an instrument for a musician's expression. It is because we habitually think of the body as being the person that we find it difficult to realize that a soul with past experiences has entered this infant body. We think of the power and intelligence of a soul and then look at the baby and find no indication of such things. But that is only because the body is such a new and undeveloped instrument that it is at first useless. Only slowly can it be brought under the control of the soul and made to express this intelligence and power. Only when the physical body has reached its maturity can the soul that is using it fully express itself.

During the early years of childhood his consciousness is divided between the astral and physical worlds with the result that he is often somewhat confused and brings fragments of other worldness into physical life.

* Intimations of Immortality

At the age of seven, sometimes referred to as the age of reason, the child's consciousness may be said to be fully centered in his physical body, and he becomes responsible for his actions. But only when the body and brain are matured will the opportunity come for his complete expression.

That we learn by experience no one will deny. That the events of daily life develop intellect and sympathy is obvious. And it is equally true that only a very small portion of the soul's evolution can be accomplished in even the longest physical life possible to man. So the theosophical belief is that the way nature accomplishes its fullest achievement is by repeated visits of the soul to the earth realm. Out of the pattern of his past lives on earth has the child's present life been built. His soul has garnered the harvest of experience from each of his past incarnations; and his soul has provided the blue-print, as it were, for this new physical body. The kind of thinking and feeling that this individual has done in previous lives on earth has become the essence of his capacity for thought and feeling in the new mental and emotional bodies of this child and for their expression through his physical body.

The child is always born into a family composed of his comrades of the past. His parents are not new to him—he is not being introduced to them for the first time. They are old ties renewed for this fresh experience on earth so that they may work out together under the law of Karma the causes set in motion long ago. It would not be reasonable to think that the unselfish love which normally exists between parent and child suddenly springs into existence. Theosophy says it is the fruition of a gradual development through many associations in past lives. And, too, we have to face the fact that all parent-child relationships are not relationships of love. Probably you yourself know of at least one family in which there is an unfortunate condition of antagonism or even animosity between parent and child. Old antagonisms have to be worn out and replaced by sympathetic understanding, just as surely as old ties of love have to be strengthened. Each new life is a new opportunity for these great adjustments in human relationships.

In our journey through life after life, we meet again and again those whom we have loved and lost. We have not only a second but a thousandth chance to complete that unity of

soul which we call love in its perfection. Reincarnation shows beyond question that life is an adventure most glorious, and that this adventure does not end with death.

Once we can recapture the memory of past lives, we can see the road we have travelled down the centuries to our present existence. Then bursts upon us the reason we are here. This knowledge destroys all doubts and fears. We see with the eye of the mind not only the road we have travelled but the road we are about to travel. We find in such moments divine content and with it the poise and balance to meet the joys and sorrows of life. We know why we are here. We know that as life goes on, with every incarnation, we will become greater people, growing in spiritual stature, in understanding, in morality, in unselfishness.

There are no mistakes made by the great Intelligences who guide humanity and who are known to students of Theosophy as the Lords of Karma. They see that the child has been brought back to birth where he may best reap that which he has already sown, in order to take his next step in evolution. If he is born with capacities, it is because he has earned them in past lives. If he is born with handicaps, these also are the result of his past or of his need to learn. Perfect justice rules the world, and every man makes his own destiny.

The parents' responsibility lies, then, along the lines of furthering the development of the child's talents which he has acquired in the long past, and which if strong enough, always come to the fore in an early age. The parents are there not only to encourage good tendencies, but to check evil ones. Kahlil Gibran says in "The Prophet", and I quote:

"Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing
for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

"You may give them your love but not your thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which
you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

"You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday."

The greatest of the baby's needs is love. It has been found that babies born in poverty with inadequate food, yet given love, thrive better than those deprived of love though born in wealth. Vibrations of love cause the child to develop like a flower unfolding in the sunlight. Psychologists tell us that often the newly born seem to be frightened without cause. They say this is due to the fact that having known nothing but nearness to the mother before birth, the outer world seems a lonely place to the newborn. A sense of security is one of the baby's greatest needs. This is best given by the mother's touch--the feeling of her arms about the tiny body--the soft sound of her voice. It is said that a happy mother makes for a happy child. The ideal of course, is love of both parents for him and for each other.

It is strange to see the transformation of the parents' love when their first born appears. Before the coming of the child, their love for each other was largely possessive and self-centered. But with initiation into parenthood they forget themselves and they become sacrificing, always ready and eager to serve their newly born. When once we understand something of this mystery of birth we come to regard the rebirth of the soul into a baby body with reverence and humility. Because it is the great creative force of love which brings it--a force that forever recreates the world.

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